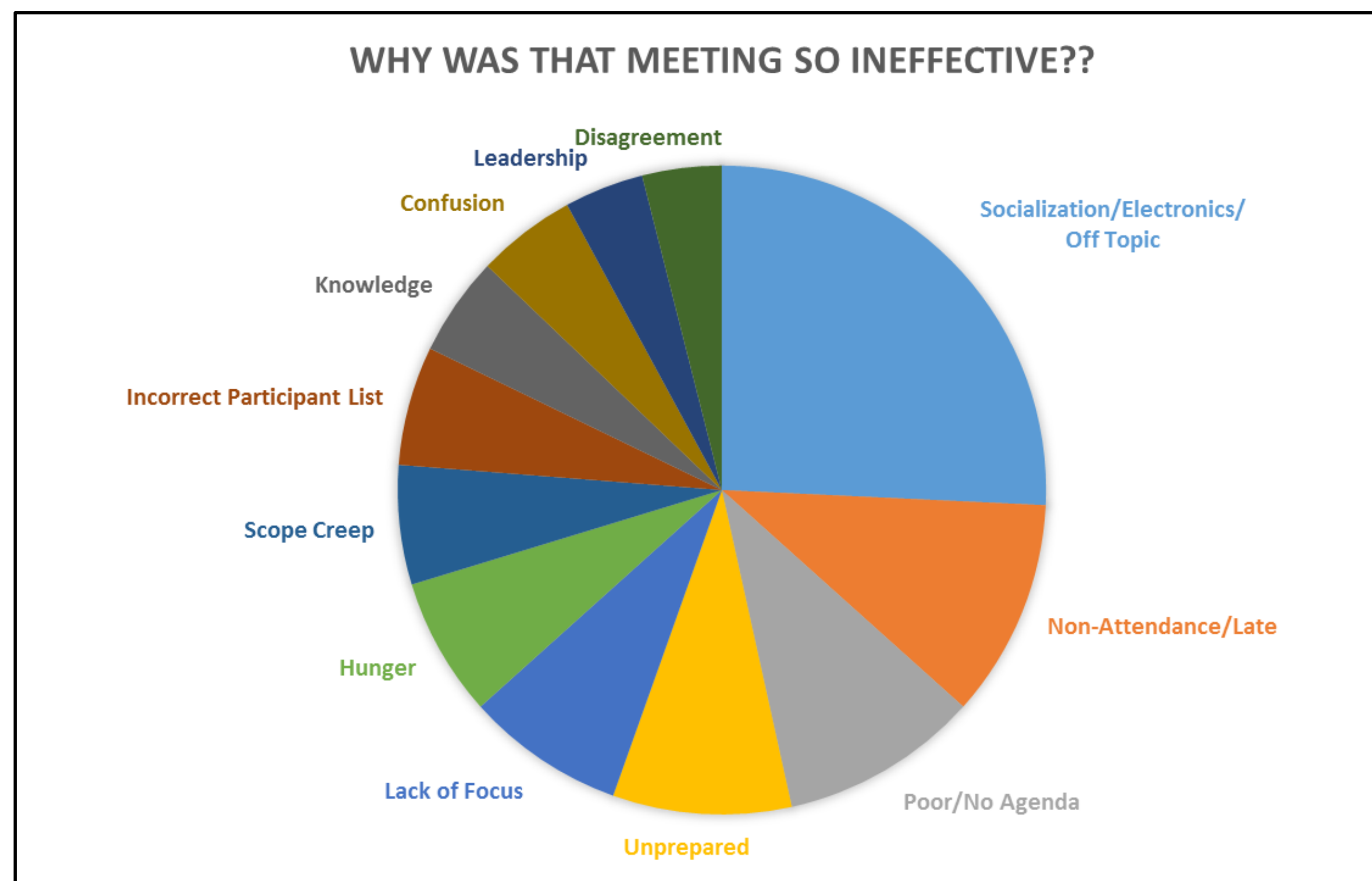


How to Lead Your Team to a Successful Capstone Project

A Student's Guide

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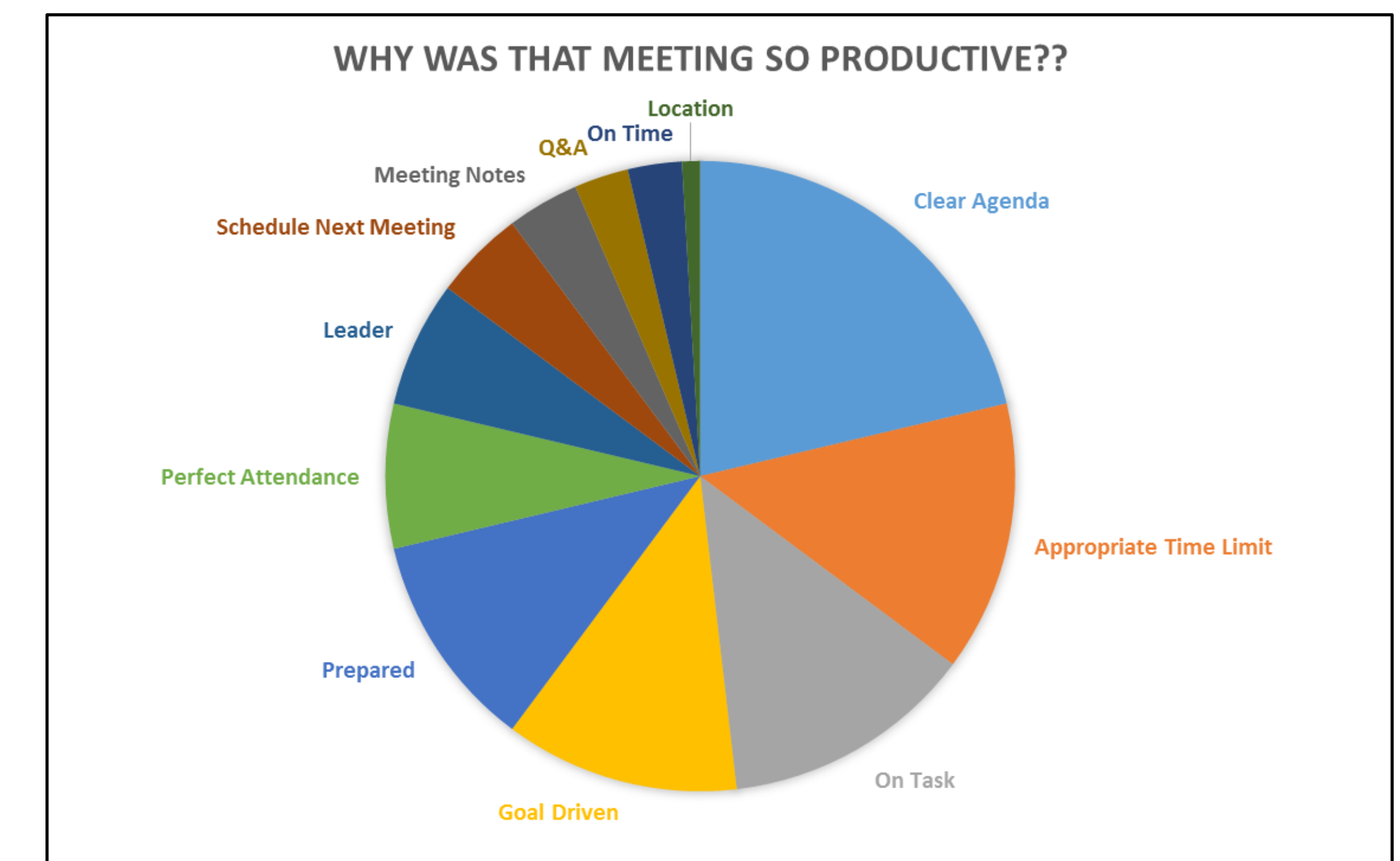
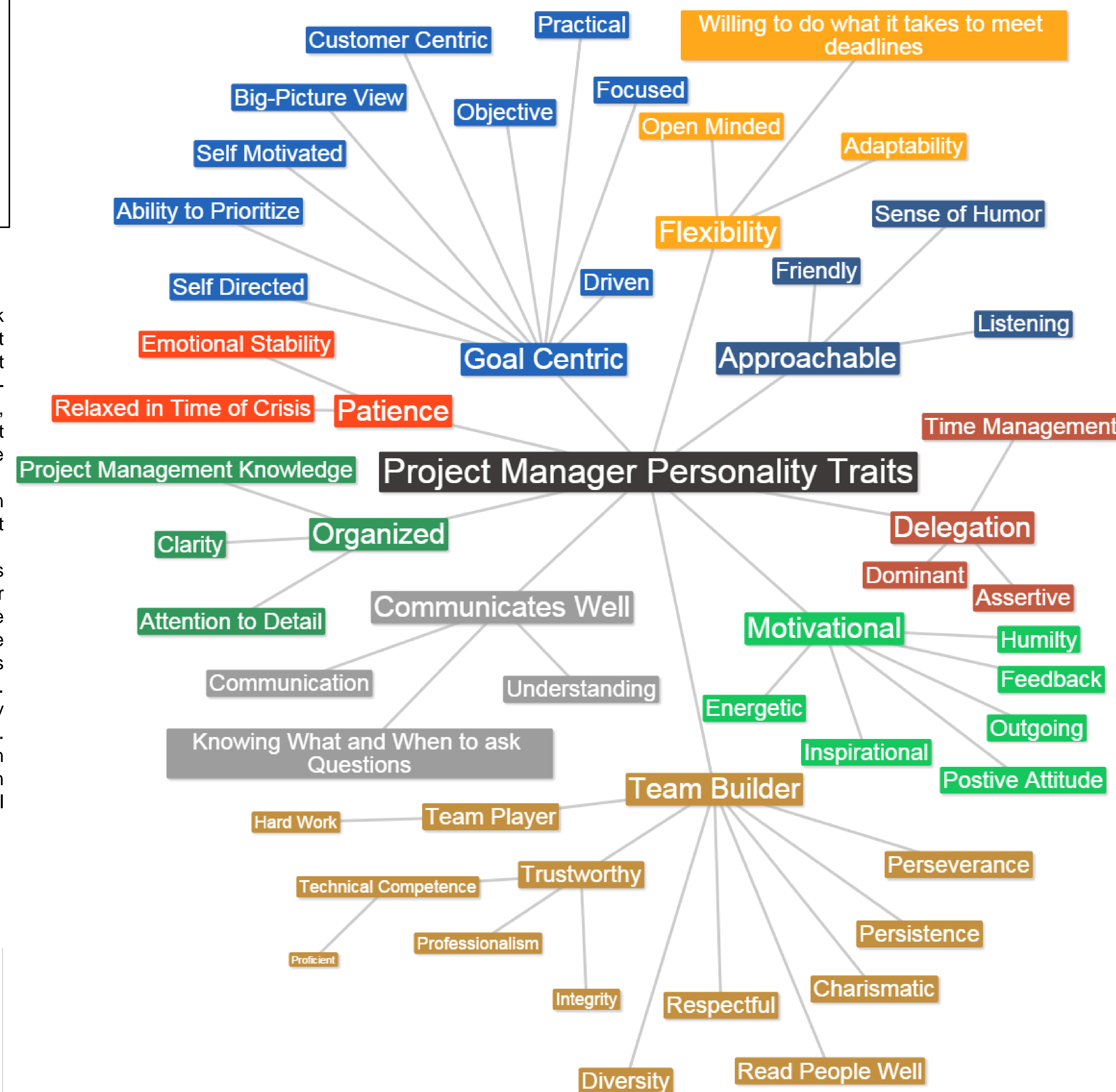
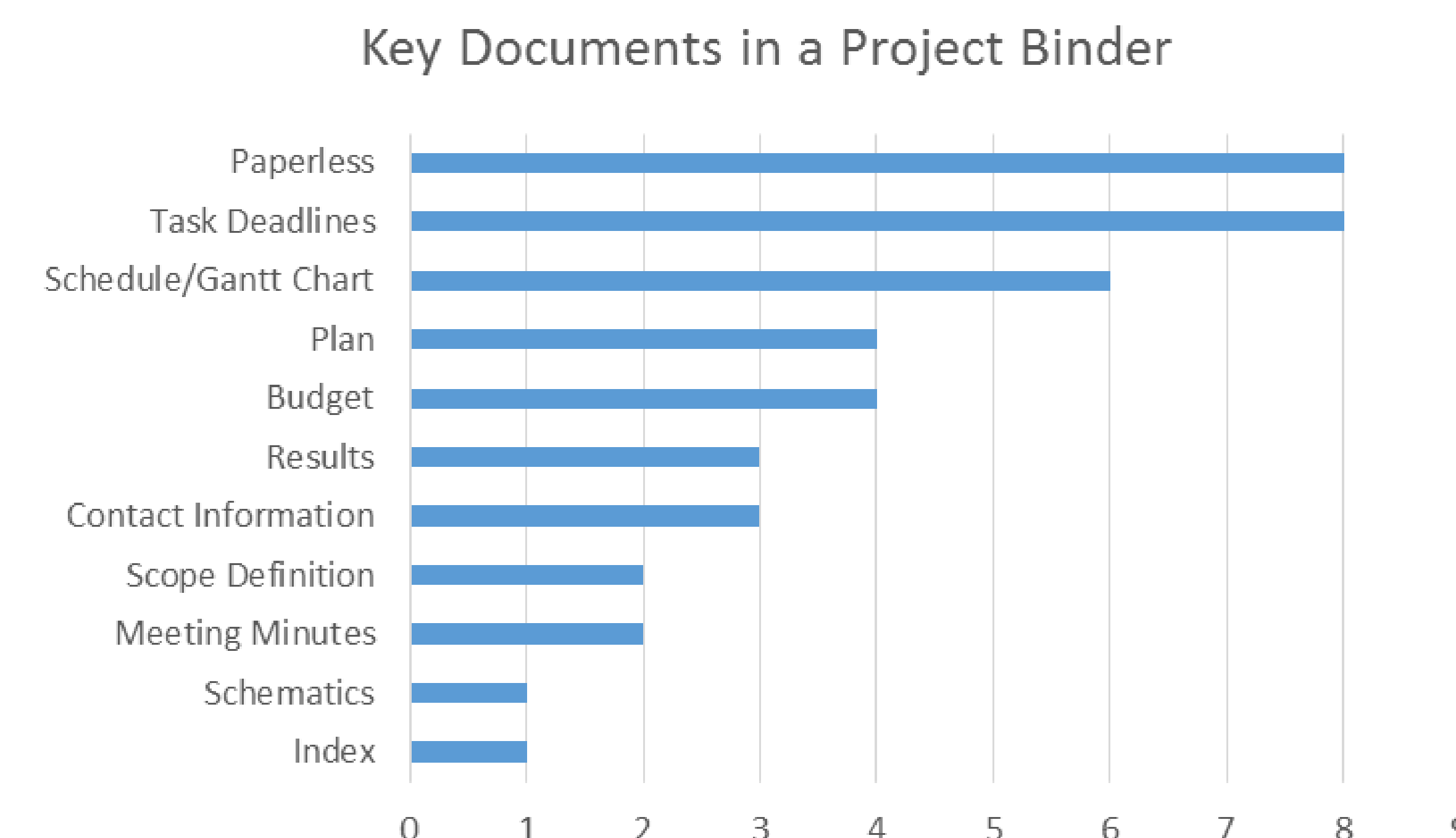


Abstract

The purpose of this project is to analyze and develop a “student” guidebook to manage a senior design or capstone project. The outcome of the project will be a booklet which can be handed to the students chosen as project managers for their capstone project. This booklet will contain a step-by-step guide on leading projects. The guide will include best practices, software tools and how to use them, as well as describing exactly what steps should be taken in order to achieve a successful conclusion to the project.

The booklet will also describe some personality traits which are seen in successful project managers both on real world projects and in past student capstone projects.

To complete this project, recent graduates will be interviewed, as a means of learning what they felt were the strengths and weaknesses of their capstone projects. These interviews will also investigate what tools the graduates have used for project management and which ones they feel are the easiest to use while having the highest success rate. These analyses will then be used to determine which tool is best for student projects. Throughout the process, research will be done to develop a list of key personality traits shared by project managers in varying disciplines. Research will also be done to collect a listing of techniques that are used in helping to teach students the field of project management and explain which are the most successful and why they work. The final booklets will be available as handouts on the day of the presentation.



Summary

To complete this project, I surveyed 25 professionals regarding their experience in the field of Project Management. There were about 25 questions on the survey which included subject such as how many projects the individual worked on and managed, their ideas on the personality traits of a good team leader, advice on efficient meetings, advice on project binders and project management software tools, and reflections on their experiences with college projects. The professionals surveyed came from a wide variety of academic backgrounds, including Engineering, Mathematics, Business, Education, Music, Theatre and Science.

Most of the questions in the survey were essay style, open-ended questions so it was interesting to see the wide variety of responses I received. For example, in response to my question regarding the personality of a team leader, I got almost 100 unique words or phrases. Due to the overwhelming number of unique answers I chose to make a word map instead of attempting to narrow it down into something that would make a realistic looking pie chart.

I hope that those who view this project come away with a better understanding of what it takes to have a successful project. Through my research, I found that the most important aspects of a project are efficient and effective meetings, an organized team leader who communicates with his or her team, and a clear, documented schedule or list of tasks with deadlines for each member of the team.

